

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (currently amended): A powder comprising silica-coated zinc oxide fine particles in which the surface of each particle is coated with silica, wherein large particles of 5 µm or more account for 0.1 mass% or less and this amount is obtained by a dry-format classification.

2. (currently amended): A powder comprising surface-hydrophobicized silica-coated zinc oxide fine particles in which the silica-coated zinc oxide fine particles whose surfaces have been coated with silica are further treated with a hydrophobicity-imparting agent, wherein large particles of 5 µm or more account for 0.1 mass% or less and this amount is obtained by a dry-format classification.

3. (original): The powder as claimed in claim 2, wherein the hydrophobicity-imparting agent is one or more members selected from the group consisting of silicone oils, alkoxysilanes, silane coupling agents, and higher fatty acid salts.

4. (original): The powder as claimed in any of claims 1 through 3, wherein the silica-coated zinc oxide fine particles have silica coating of 0.5 to 100 nm in thickness.

5. (currently amended): The powder as claimed in claim 1 or 2any of claims 1 through 4, wherein the silica-coated zinc oxide fine particles have an average primary particle size of 1 to 200 nm.

6. (currently amended): The powder as claimed in claim 2-~~or 3~~, wherein the surface-hydrophobicized, silica-coated zinc oxide fine particles have an average primary particle size of 5 to 120 nm and a silica-film thickness of 0.5 to 25 nm.

7. (currently amended): The powder as claimed in claim 1 or 2any of claims 1 through 6, wherein the ratio I of infrared absorption peak intensity of silica film of the silica-coated zinc oxide fine particles at 1150 to 1250 cm⁻¹ to that at 1000 to 1100 cm⁻¹ as determined on an infrared absorption spectrum is 0.2 or more ($I=I_1/I_2$; wherein I_1 denotes absorption peak intensity at 1150 to 1250 cm⁻¹ and I_2 denotes absorption peak intensity at 1000 to 1100 cm⁻¹), and the silica film has a refractive index of 1.435 or more.

8. (currently amended): The powder as claimed in claim 1 or 2any of claims 1 through 7, wherein the powder exhibits a photocatalytic activity of 60 Pa/min or less as measured through the tetralin auto-oxidation method.

9. (currently amended): The powder as claimed in claim 1 or 2any of claims 1 through 8, wherein the powder exhibits a dye color fading rate ($\Delta ABS_{490}/\text{hour}$) of 0.1 or less as measured through the sunset yellow method.

10. (currently amended): The powder as claimed in claim 1 or 2~~any of claims 1 through 9~~, wherein the powder exhibits an organic UV absorber decomposition rate ($\Delta\text{ABS}_{340}/\text{hour}$) of 0.01 or less as measured through the Parasol method.

11. (currently amended): The powder as claimed in claim 1 or 2~~any of claims 1 through 10~~, wherein the powder exhibits a percent organic UV absorber decomposition of 5% or less as measured through the ethylhexyl p-methoxycinnamate method.

12. (currently amended): The powder comprising silica-coated zinc oxide fine particles as claimed in claim 1 or 2~~any one of claims 1 through 11~~, which contains titanium oxide.

13. (original): The powder comprising silica-coated zinc oxide fine particles as claimed in claim 12, wherein titanium oxide in an amount of 2 parts by mass to 5 parts by mass is further contained based on zinc oxide of 10 parts by mass.

14. (currently amended): The powder comprising silica-coated zinc oxide fine particles as claimed in claim 12-~~or 13~~, wherein at least one part of titanium oxide is coated with silica.

15. (currently amended): The powder comprising silica-coated zinc oxide fine particles as claimed in ~~claim 12~~~~any one of claims 12 through 14~~, wherein the titanium oxide contains a mixed crystal having a titanium-oxygen-silicon bond in its primary particles.

16. (original): The powder comprising silica-coated zinc oxide fine particles as claimed in claim 15, wherein when the BET specific surface area of titanium oxide is represented by “A m²/g” and the SiO₂ content is represented by “B mass%”, the ratio of B/A is from 0.02 to 0.5.

17. (currently amended): The powder comprising silica-coated zinc oxide fine particles as claimed in claim 15-~~or 16~~, wherein BET specific surface area of the titanium oxide is from 10 to 200 m²/g.

18. (currently amended): The powder comprising silica-coated zinc oxide fine particles as claimed in ~~claim 15~~~~any one of claims 15 through 17~~, wherein the average primary particle size of titanium oxide is 0.008 μm to 0.15 μm.

19. (currently amended): The powder comprising silica-coated zinc oxide fine particles as claimed in ~~claim 15~~~~any one of claims 15 through 18~~, wherein the titanium oxide has core (a nucleus)/shell (a husk) structure, wherein the core is TiO₂-rich structure and the shell is SiO₂-rich structure.

20. (currently amended): An organic polymer composition containing a powder comprising silica-coated zinc oxide fine particles as claimed in claim 1 or 2~~any one of claims 1 through 19~~, and a thermoplastic resin.

21. (currently amended): An organic polymer composition consisting essentially of a powder comprising silica-coated zinc oxide fine particles as claimed in claim 1 or 2~~any one of claims 1 through 19~~, and a thermoplastic resin.

22. (currently amended): The organic polymer composition as claimed in claim 20-~~or 21~~, wherein the thermoplastic resin is selected from the group consisting of polyethylenes, polypropylenes, polystyrenes, polyamides, polyesters, and polycarbonates.

23. (currently amended): A shape-imparted product of an organic polymer composition as claimed in claim 20~~any one of claims 20 through 22~~.

24. (original): The shape-imparted product as claimed in claim 23, which is selected from the group consisting of fibers, yarns, films, tapes, hollow products, and multi-layer structures.

25. (currently amended): An object comprising a shape-imparted product as claimed in claim 23-~~or 24~~ and selected from the group consisting of building materials for interior

furnishings and exterior finish, machinery, exterior and interior décor materials for automobiles, glass products, electric appliances, agricultural materials, electronic apparatus, tools, tableware, bath products, toiletry products, furniture, clothing, woven fabrics, non-woven fabrics, cloth products, leather products, paper products, sporting goods, futon, containers, eyeglasses, signboards, piping, wiring, brackets, sanitary materials, automobile parts, outdoor goods such as tents, panty hose, socks, gloves, and masks.

26. (currently amended): The cosmetic material comprising the powder comprising silica-coated zinc oxide fine particles as claimed in claim 1 or 2~~any one of claims 1 through 19~~.

27. (new): A process for producing silica-coated zinc oxide fine particles according to claim 1, comprising the steps of:

bringing a composition for forming silica coating into contact with raw material zinc oxide particles whose primary particles have an average particle size of 5nm to 200nm, wherein the composition for forming silica coating contains at least the following compositions:

- 1) silicic acid containing neither an organic group nor a halogen, or a precursor capable of producing such silicic acid,
- 2) water,
- 3) an alkali, and
- 4) an organic solvent,

whereby surfaces of the zinc oxide particles are selectively coated with a silica coating, and

subjecting the obtained silica-coated zinc oxide particles to a dry-format classification to reduce the number of large particles.

28. (new): The process according to claim 27, wherein said composition for forming silica coating has a water/organic solvent ratio by volume of 0.1 to 10 and a silicon content of 0.001 to 5 mol/L.

29. (new): A process for producing surface-hydrophobicized silica-coated zinc oxide fine particles according to claim 2, comprising the steps of:

bringing a composition for forming silica coating into contact with raw material zinc oxide particles whose primary particles have an average particle size of 5nm to 200nm, wherein the composition for forming silica coating contains at least the following compositions:

- 1) silicic acid containing neither an organic group nor a halogen, or a precursor capable of producing such silicic acid,
- 2) water,
- 3) an alkali, and
- 4) an organic solvent,

whereby surfaces of the zinc oxide particles are selectively coated with a silica coating, subjecting the produced silica-coated zinc oxide particles to surface treatment with a hydrophobicity-imparting agent to obtain surface-hydrophobicized silica-coated zinc oxide particles, and

subjecting the obtained surface-hydrophobicized silica-coated zinc oxide particles to a dry-format classification to reduce the number of large particles.

30. (new): The process according to claim 29, wherein said composition for forming silica coating has a water/organic solvent ratio by volume of 0.1 to 10 and a silicon content of 0.001 to 5 mol/L.